

Awesome Utah

By JEREMY BARNUM

With five spectacular natural parks, this western state's claim to natural splendor is undisputed.

Well, “Awesome Utah” is not, after all, my home state's motto. The motto is “industry” and the state symbol is the beehive, a remembrance of the pioneers who apparently managed to stop staring at the beautiful scenery long enough to get busy building homes, schools, businesses, towns, roads...

In 2006, Utah's Office of Tourism launched a new brand for the state: “life elevated.” With its youthful demographics, a growing economy, robust tourist industry, some of the world's best skiing and an average elevation of 1,280 meters—the brand just might stick.

Still, awesome it is. From high alpine forests sur-

rounded by craggy Rocky Mountain peaks to serene deserts peppered with huge bare rock monoliths and crisscrossed by narrow slot canyons, Utah has nearly every geological or geographical feature imaginable, drawing outdoor enthusiasts and lovers of natural beauty from around the globe.

At 219,887 square kilometers, Utah has an area two times the size of Bihar, with only 2.5 million people, roughly 3 percent of Bihar's population of more than 83 million. Over three-quarters of Utah's residents live along the resource-rich Wasatch Front, a relatively narrow valley between the Wasatch Mountains and the largest inland body of salt water in the Western

Above: The Natural Bridge in Utah's Arches National Park blocks the mid-day sun.

Right: A mountaineer marvels at the expanse of the Uinta Mountain range from the summit of Bald Mountain in Utah.

Far right: The Cedar Breaks National Monument forest in Utah.



Utah Trade and Education Delegation Visits India



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Utah Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. has made two trips to India in less than a year. Last December, he and his wife, Mary Kaye, came to adopt their daughter Asha from an orphanage in Nadiad, Gujarat. This year, he returned with a delegation of close to 30 business, science, technology and educational leaders, including several Indian Americans. Huntsman had also visited India when he was the deputy U.S. trade representative, negotiating a Trade Investment Framework Agreement.

This trade mission with an education heart visited New Delhi, Mumbai and Pune from October 27-November 2. It was aimed

at generating research, development and business links between Indian companies and universities and their counterparts in one of America's youngest, cleanest and most beautiful states. In Mumbai, Huntsman mentioned that Utah's gorgeous scenery could provide good locations for Bollywood moviemakers. He said clean energy is important in Utah, which has expertise to share in this area. He also emphasized that Utah's young population wants to understand India-U.S. relations from a wider perspective. This youthful citizenry also helps make Utah an innovative state. —L.K.L.

Hemisphere, the Great Salt Lake. Utah's biggest city and state capital, Salt Lake City, is built along the lake. As a testimony to its beauty, over 65 percent of the state of Utah is owned, and preserved, by the U.S. Federal Government. In fact, southern Utah has the highest concentration of national parks in America.

Most of the state enjoys four distinct seasons: cold winters with occasional snow; hot, dry summers, and pleasant spring and fall months. However, many of Utah's alpine ski resorts accumulate more than 15 meters of dry and powdery snow, perfect for skiing and snowboarding. The unique snow composition is called by winter sports aficionados "the greatest snow on earth."



More than 2,000 athletes from 85 nations put Utah's snow and ice to the test in February 2002 when Salt Lake City hosted the Winter Olympic Games. Despite early controversies and bribery allegations surrounding the city's bid for the Games, and security concerns in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the event ultimately garnered positive international attention for Utah.

The Games also helped raise the prominence of Mitt Romney, a current contender for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination. The Salt Lake Organizing Committee hired Romney as president and CEO in 1999 as the city worked to put the scandal-ridden Games back on track. He was later elected governor of Massachusetts, somewhat of a feat for a Republican from the conservative Mormon Church running for office in a state considered a Democratic stronghold.

Park City, Utah continues to roll out the red carpet on snow-shoveled walks every winter for some of the film industry's heaviest hitters attending actor-director Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival, which encourages independent filmmakers. Although Redford is from Southern California, his affinity for Utah grew when he married a Utah girl.

Some other famous Utahns, who were born in the state, are: Harvey Fletcher, known as the father of stereophonic sound and inventor of the hearing aid; J. Willard Marriott, founder of the worldwide hotel chain; Walter Frederick Morrison, inventor of the Frisbee, and outlaw Butch Cassidy. A movie about his exploits, "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," was Redford's breakthrough film.

Various Native American cultures have called Utah home for thousands of years. Utah's name is derived

The Mormon Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is lit up in Salt Lake City, Utah.



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1) Top: Erosion has shaped limestone and mudstone into arrays of spires and pinnacles in Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah.

2) Above, center: Skiers are dropped by helicopter near the summit of Powder Mountain to enjoy Utah's "greatest snow on earth."

3) Above left: Monument Valley, on the border of Utah and Arizona, is the setting for many movies about the Old West.

4) Above: Zion Canyon, seen from the top of Angels Landing at sunset in Zion National Park, Utah.

Who Are the Mormons?

The 11 million-member Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded in the early 1800s by Joseph Smith in New York state. He said an angel revealed to him the Book of Mormon and that it had been written by a man of that name living in America in ancient times. This book is the founding scripture of Mormonism. The word "latter-day" in the church's official name stems from the Mormons' belief that after the death of the early apostles of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church fell into apostasy and needed to be restored in the latter days. Mormons believe this period began in 1820 when Smith said he began receiving visions. Smith's teachings—such as that the Garden of Eden was in the U.S. state of Missouri, that God had revealed to him the idea of plural marriage, that Christ had appeared to ancient Israelites living in the Americas, and rites such as proxy baptism and marriage ceremonies for deceased ancestors—put Mormonism out of the mainstream of most Christian churches. Persecuted in their early history, Mormons kept moving to practice their beliefs in freedom, eventually settling in Utah.

—L.K.L.

from the Ute tribe, meaning "people of the mountains." Utah was an important midway point for migrants and travelers heading west across the United States. An ambitious effort to link the railway network of the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, creating the first transcontinental railroad, was completed in northeastern Utah in 1869, accelerating the settlement of the American West.

Utah's first modern communities were established in the mid-1800s by Mormon pioneers in what was then Mexican territory. Utah, called Deseret by these settlers, soon became a U.S. territory, but not a state, due in part to the federal government's objection to polygamy, which was preached and practiced by the Mormons. The Mormon Church issued a manifesto ending official approval of polygamy in 1890 and Utah became a state in 1894. There are breakaway factions that still engage in polygamy, which is illegal. They live in remote parts of Utah and neighboring states. Utah's constitution granted women the right to vote in 1895, making it one of the first states to do so.

Utah is considered a "red state," meaning it consistently votes Republican. In 2004, President George W. Bush won Utah's five electoral votes by a margin of 46 percent, his largest margin of victory. Both of Utah's U.S. Senators, and two of its three U.S. Representatives are Republicans.

The residents of Salt Lake City, however, have consistently elected a Democrat for mayor for the last three decades. The current mayor, Rocky Anderson, has been an outspoken critic of the war in Iraq and has gained international notice for his environmentalist agenda.

Utah's residents are among the youngest and healthiest Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Utah has the highest birth rate, largest household size, and the highest rate of married couples with children. Utah's population has the fourth-longest life expectancy, the fewest smokers and the lowest number of cancer deaths in America.

Utah's youthful residents do, however, possess a sweet tooth. Jell-O, the official snack food of Utah, is a jiggly and sugary substance made from gelatin that is colored but still translucent and comes in flavors from cherry to lemon. Utahns love their Jell-O plain or jelled in a mold mixed with various fruits, occasionally carrots and even processed milk.

Education is a priority for Utah families and the state boasts the highest literacy rate in the United States at 94 percent. Utah has 10 public and three private universities and colleges, and ranks second in the country for per capita higher education spending. The world's first artificial heart transplant and the first artificial limb, an arm, were pioneered by faculty at Utah universities.

This year, a University of Utah researcher, Mario Capecchi, won a Nobel Prize along with two other scientists for work on the principles for introducing specific gene modifications in mice by the use of embryonic stem cells.

Utah's universities have courses in more than 50 languages and it is estimated that more than 130 languages are spoken in the state. Many Utahns learn foreign languages to perform voluntary tours as Mormon missionaries around the world.

Utah has maintained a relatively resilient and vibrant economy due in part to the "can-do" attitude of its young, growing workforce. The unemployment rate, 2.6 percent, is very low compared to the 4.6 percent national average. Yes, that old, beehive symbol and "industry" motto seem to be apt. But if you visit, don't forget to indulge your sense of awe.

Adventure racers rappel down a cliff during a March snowstorm in the mountains east of Moab, Utah.



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